DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 187 478 PS 011 520

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TITLE Parent Education and Cultural Change in American Families.
INSTITUTION Southwest Educational Development Lab., Austin, Tex.
PUB DATE Apr 80
NOTE 87p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Boston, MA, April 7-11, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; Ethnography; *Influences; Interviews; Models; Mothers; Observation; *Organizational Theories; Parent Associations; Parent Attitudes; *Parent Education; *Parents; *Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; *Social Change

ABSTRACT

Using an ethnographic approach, three Parent Education Programs were studied to describe the social setting in which they took place and to document their impact upon parents. The programs were conceptualized as social service organizations designed to change the parental roles of participants. Each program was observed, interviews were conducted with program participants, and relevant documents were examined. Programs were found to vary along various formal organizational characteristics, and participants also differed in terms of their socioeconomic characteristics and motivation to participate. Three models of cultural change (cultural elaboration, cultural reinforcement, and cultural reorganization) were proposed to reflect the underlying rationales of the programs and the changes experienced by the families that participate in them. (Author/MP)

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PARENT EDUCATION

AND CULTURAL CHANGE IN AMERICAN FAMILIES

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Annual Meeting
Boston, Massachusetts

April 7-11, 1980

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ABSTRACT

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The Family and Community Studies Project evolved from past projects at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Many of these projects involved the development of materials, training, and technical assistance for parent education programs and, prior to that, for early childhood education programs. Close to a decade's practical experience in the field provided staff members with an intuitive grasp of the effectiveness and the limits of educational programs intervening in the socialization of preschool children and their parents. Various evaluations of the effectiveness of particular materials and approaches in parent education had been undertaken in the course of working in the field. Yet, a comprehensive and systematic understanding of a greater issue was missing: what part programs such as parent education played in the ongoing life of families and communities. In other words, the context for understanding needs of families and appropriate responses of the community to those needs was missing; the significance of any given program could only be evaluated in terms of its own goals rather than in terms of its impact on families and communities.

Furthermore, the appropriateness of public intervention into what American culture takes to be a private domain, family life, was increasingly being called into question as the decade came to a close. While SEDL continued to promote parent education, supported in part by public monies, consulting with public agencies, and training employees in public schools, FACS began to question some of the premises upon which parent education was based. Yet it was clear that the phenomenon of parent education was

widespread, and not merely the creation of one or two bureaucracies. Where public promotion of parent education did not exist, small programs seemed to surface with private sponsorship, as study groups or support groups in parents' homes or as parenting courses in community centers or churches. We also were convinced that some parents were seeking support or information to help them better cope with parenthood, even though one could question how much help the experts actually gave.

Finally, as we suggest in our introduction to families, parent education is but one of many cultural phenomena which function in the same way: as mediations between the public and private life of individuals in American culture, between the world of workplace or school and the world of home. We selected parent education as a focus of research, not only because we were familiar with the people and the activities of parent education, but also because it represented one kind of linkage between family and society. By understanding in a deeper way the meaning of parent education in the 1970's, we could begin to understand both the changing family and the changing society which programs such as parent education help mediate.

CHAPTER II: CHANGING FAMILIES AND PARENT EDUCATION: THE FAMILY AT WORK AND IN SCHOOL

A. Introduction

One of the central premises of Western social science is the interrelatedness of all social phenomena. From the earliest kinship studies in 19th century anthropology, such as the seminal work of Lewis Henry Morgan, down to current discourse on the family, the institution of the family has been seen as variable in different times and places and dependent on other political and economic institutions of society. The variety of family forms in different cultures also allows us to see the variety of "families" in American culture. There is no ideal family, nor any abstract "scientific" definition of family, that could adequately describe the lives of individual parents and children, caught in a myriad of different instances and circumstances of contemporary life in a complex society.

It was precisely this variety which inspired popular imagination in the late 1950's and early 1960's through such widely read photoessays as "The Family of Man." The concept of variant family forms brought to the public by anthropologists such as Margaret Mead, seemed to challenge and broaden Freudian reductions of social-psychological reality to patriarchal nuclear families. Yet, the nuclear family continued to be a cultural norm throughout this period of time, and other kinds of families were seen as deviant.

As cultural changes in the 1960's took place, cultural conservatives lamented the breakdown of the nuclear family and cultural radicals began to attack the nuclear family as the source of society's ills. Meanwhile, social science began to look at the "deviant" cases, families which were structured differently and may have seemed normal to those who were members, but struck

outsiders as highly distinctive. The cross-generational family was identified, usually headed by grandmothers, popularly known as a matriarchal household. The extended family, common among ethnic groups in earlier decades, was rediscovered. Finally, the emergence of families of single parents was noted as increasingly frequent (Aschenbrenner, 1975; McAdoo, 1975; Shorter, 1975; Hoffman and Nye, 1974). Economic and sociological reasons for these varying forms were proposed. Changing family structure could be seen as a strategy adapted to social and economic circumstances with respective advantages and disadvantages for maintaining the well-being of adult and child members (Zaretsky, 1976; Shorter, 1977).

The extended family was seen as a successful strategy for pooling resources and coping with poverty, both in the urban ghetto and in the agricultural migrant stream (Stack, 1974). Not all extended families remained intact when faced with the rigors of finding work and income. Frequently, men detached themselves from the family or were never integrated to begin with, resulting in lateral families with no male spouses, spanning three generations or more. Migration of a different sort, geographic and class "mobility," was the advantage in nuclear families (McAdoo, 1975; McQueen, 1971). While many nuclear families were embedded within networks of supporting extended families, residing perhaps in the same vicinity, others became increasingly isolated from any blood relations (Bernard, 1974; Shorter, 1977). The fissioning of nuclear families as the divorce rate increased in the fifties and the sixties led to single parent families. This development, too, was related to increasing work demands on husbands, isolation of wives in housework, and changing expectations about sex roles.

While none of the family forms are ahistorical and perfected structures, neither are they necessarily pathological as some ideologists would claim.

More families succeed than fail at raising children and at recreating a culture in which children learn how to become competent adults. All families reproduce certain relationships with the larger social order as well. However, no family socializes the young, transmits culture, and reproduces society alone.

As Philippe Aries (1962) points out, the notion that the family had primary responsibility for the socialization of its children was an invention of the rising middle class in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries. Even while individual families started to claim a greater share of responsibility for their own children from the community of adults, the institution of school expanded and pulled children into its domain. While parents worked, children came to have their own work, apart from the ongoing work of the community.

B. Work and School

In America, schooling expanded in order to prepare different classes of children for different classes of work (Lasch, 1979; Bowles, 1974; Bowles and Gintis, 1976). As schooling strengthened its hold on the children of all classes, working class demands that education fulfill the egalitarian ideal of American democracy pulled public education away from an original purpose of class domination. Public education has continued to be a battleground ever since, frequently supporting the public order, transmitting the culture of one class, and raising the young to be obedient workers and consumers, yet sometimes undermining the public order, creating new culture, and sowing the seeds of rebellion among the young (Gorelick, 1977).

The usefulness of education to the dominant class and the hopes for education of the working classes combined to make school a preeminent

social institution in American life. Schools socialize the young, and thereby create and maintain the shared cultural meanings which the young carry with them into adult life. Whereas the church had once claimed universality and demanded compulsory attendance, by the beginning of the twentieth century, school exercised the same dominion, at least over society's younger members (Lasch, 1977; 1978). Throughout the twentieth century school has demanded more years, more concentration, and more dedication from the young with each succeeding decade.

If the changing opportunities and demands of work have been a prime causal factor in changing the structure of the family, then school has been a major agent in the cultural changes which the family has undergone. Since the turn of the century, schools have increasingly emphasized non-academic, "life adjustment" curriculum (Lasch, 1978). In addition to transmitting intellectual information they have provided vocational training which is congruent with industrial recruitment, selection, and certification. Besides vocational training, schools also provide other "life training," such as home economics, bookkeeping, and health, which was formerly the province of the family or other community institutions with which the family was associated. Finally, counselors and teachers have influenced the basic values and life choices of students, ranging from career decisions to sexual attitudes.

In essence, schools have appropriated more and more of the cultural information which is transmitted to the young. They have also served to change the relationships between child and family. Ethnic minority children in particular may become acculturated to a dominant cultural tradition different from their parents. For all children, schools

increasingly provide a context for socialization, especially peer socialization, which may differ in values from the family (Bronfenbrenner, 1970).

A number of experts in the field, Lasch and Shorter being the most recent, have called this attrition of socialization within the family a "transfer of functions" to other institutions. While this may be an oversimplification of a complex process, it provides a working base from which to begin to analyze what has happened to the family as a result of the changing relationships between family, school and work.

We have suggested that one major trend has been the increasing role of the school in the socialization of the young. We have also argued that the school, as a result of its participation in the socialization process has affected the culture of families. Particularly, school has tried to assimilate children who were "different" and to "provide opportunities" that the family could not provide.

However, though schools instituted widely different types of programs (remedial, preschool education, tracking, open classrooms among them), it became increasingly clear to educators and parents alike that the school was not doing all that well in reaching its goal. As a result, starting in about the mid sixties, a movement toward "strengthening the whole family" set in. This meant very simply socializing adults. It was based on the underlying assumption that parents could not be good parents anymore without outside expert help. Educators, instead of looking to themselves for the failure to teach children, put responsibility on the family. The attempts to socialize adults which followed from this are based on similar premises found in the schools: "different" parents need to be socialized so that they will be in a position to transmit the values and behaviors of the dominant society.

The socialization of adults has become a major pasttime in this society. Numerous therapeutic and education structures have arisen which seek essentially to mediate the relationship of families to school or work. They include marriage counseling, psychiatric services, adult education, courses in home management, and a wealth of literature on such subjects as child rearing and family living. Within this category fall parent education programs. None of these resources address the social causes of family stress, for they do not try to change either workplace or school. Rather, they attempt to change the individual or the family.

It is becoming increasingly controversial whether such resources do in fact help support the family. Lasch (1977) has recently criticized the "helping professions" for adding simply one more layer of social control on the family. As such, they may impinge upon the autonomy and resourcefulness of families and undercut in one more way their ability to raise their own children. It could also be that their mediations do provide needed support for families whose well-being is threatened.

C. The History of Parent Education

Parent education as a social phenomenon is not new. Its roots, though informal and unorganized, can be traced back to the 1800's. Brim (1965), Gordon (1977), and Schlossman (1976) have begun providing the historical background of parent education programs. Beginning in the 1880's, Stanley Hall popularized what might best be called an "evolutionary approach" to child development. Based on the then popular ideas of Darwin, he postulated the importance of hereditary bases of development, and argued for attention to the child's "natural needs." The first distinctly identifiable "parent education" movement, the child-study movement (Schlossman, 1976:440),

utilized these concepts. The child-study movement was primarily interested in the physical development of the child, and in designing ways to improve child health, but it also adopted Hall's concern with the "contents of childrens' minds."

Hall's ideas were incorporated into the next major phase of "parent education" activities, given life primarily by the inauguration of the PTA in 1897. Schlossman describes in some detail the conceptual basis for the trends evidenced by the PTA. Of interest here are two general thrusts of the PTA. First, increased attention was paid to improving the quality of life in the home. This was best done by following the precepts of Deweyian psychology, which PTA members were encouraged to learn and apply at home. Second, this movement endorsed and promoted political activity on behalf of the poor. During this era, the PTA was explicitly aimed toward "bettering the life of the poor." In essence, middle class women were perceived as change agents, while lower class women were the recipients of the new social theories intended to improve the lives of children.

The emphasis in the 1920's shifted considerably from this earlier period. The theoretical base of the 20's revolved around the developing behaviorist psychology of Watson. The major emphasis was on teaching middle class women the tenets of the new psychology so that they could be in a position to raise their children according to its precepts. The interest in social reform all but died out; the previous concern for "mainstreaming" immigrant and poor children was no longer a focus. During this period, interest rested almost exclusively on preschool children; parents were encouraged to participate in nursery school programs in order to become more "professional" parents (by applying the new psychology).

Out of this history, two general features have become associated with the term parent education: 1) the desire to upgrade child care in the home by familiarizing parents with current notions of child development; and 2) social reforms which attempted to change the life experiences of poor or immigrant parents and children.

Given the social climate and this complex of research findings which locate the critical period in early childhood, the critical developmental feature in cognition, the crucial influence in the mother, and the outcome in school failure, it was not surprising that compensatory education programs arose in response. As is well known, the early childhood compensatory education programs were designed to have impact on the child, particularly on the child's cognitive development; they were direct intervention efforts focused on poor children. The influence of the War on Poverty strategies, combined with research arguing for the significant influence of the mother, served as the rationalization for including parents in the programs. As a result of the development of compensatory education programs and parents' involvement in them, the concept of parent education has become complex and confusing.

D. Current Literature on Parent Education

Let us examine this assertion. The rebirth of interest in "parent education" and related terms such as "parent participation," "parent involvement," and the consequent proliferation of programs, historically coincides with the onset of compensatory education programs. As a result, our current understanding of what constitutes programs which deal with parents (including parent education) is heavily influenced by its association with the educational establishment. As has been shown, the historical

concept of "parent education" focused on upgrading child care and social reform directed to poor parents; it was not limited to educational establishments. In the 60's this concept was replaced by another term, "parent involvement," which included all activities (including school-based parent education) relating parents to the educational system. The literature describing these relationships between parent and school is the basis for our current understanding (and confusion) as to what constitutes parent involvement, parent education, and parent participation. This new term, "parent involvement," was both broader than the term "parent education" with reference to the range of activities included; but was also narrower, in that it restricted the definition to school-based activities.

The argument of our current research is that parent education, while it may include teaching tutoring skills, is not limited to it, nor is it exclusively found in relation to school programs.

We have argued that one of the main reasons for the confusion in concepts and terms has been the recent interest in activities which take place in compensatory education programs. Parent involvement is usually used to refer to participation of parents in educational programs directed primarily at their children; it may be used to describe the degree of control that different activities allow parents. It may be used as a synonym for parent participation in general. These activities may include some type of parent education. However, parent education as a concept and parent education programs are not limited to educational institutions.

We have opted for an understanding of the term parent education as

"those activities that utilize educational techniques to effect changes in parent role performance," regardless of setting. The key phrase in this definition is parent role. Parent Education focuses on the individual in his or her capacity as a parent. As Brim (1965) points out, this differs from focusing on the individual as husband, sister, or brother, as in the case in Family Life Courses, or on the individual as citizen (Pink, 1977) as is the case with most school governance activities.

As we have demonstrated, the relationship between parent involvement and parent education in current usage is far from clear. In addition to lack of clarity over role, part of the confusion is due to the fact that parent education may be a component of programs (especially preschool programs) directed at children. In such cases, a parent involvement program may only exist as one aspect of a program directed at children, and the parent education program may be a part of the parent involvement component. Parent education programs, on the other hand, can have a completely independent existence, although most often they are associated with a variety of human service programs. Parent education programs usually are found in settings such as: (1) preschool education programs, (2) elementary education programs, (3) organizations associated with schools such as the PTA, and (4) social service agencies, community service agencies, health service and health education agencies, mental health programs, special interest groups, advocacy groups, or religious groups. Some of these programs are private and others are public; some are operated by professionals and others are staffed by volunteers; some require fees and others are free. What they all have in common is they use educational (as opposed to therapeutic) techniques to effect changes in the way parents perform in their role as parents.

The very proliferation of terms modified by the adjective "parent" as well as coinage and circulation of a new verb, "to parent" and its gerund "parenting," bespeaks the decade-long search for redefinition of the family and parental roles taking place in American society. Confronting this ambiguity of change and redefinition, this research project sought its own definition. We learned that finding the right research question to ask was as problematic as determining an appropriate method for answering it. At the outset, however, we decided that the concepts and methods of anthropology permitted greater flexibility to explore the shifting issues of parent education, while at the same time requiring rigorous reflection on our own premises. We found that our ideas deepened as we spent more time studying our subject.

CHAPTER III: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

A. Research Questions

Traditionally, scientific inquiry is organized around questions addressing the nature of a phenomenon. What is the appropriate question to ask is the first task of research design. In a series of documents to NIE at the outset of the project, FACS refined the set of questions it was interested in. As the project progressed, new and related questions arose in meetings among staff members and with consultants.

Initially, we were struck by the number of parent education programs in a variety of settings, with various structures and curriculum. Our review of literature evaluating programs nationwide and our survey of local programs indicated that in spite of written evaluations suggesting that many programs were ineffective and not meeting their goals, old programs continued and new programs arose both in our own locality as well as across the nation. What was going on with parents that they sought out programs? What was happening in programs that seemed to satisfy parents? And finally whose interests and purposes were promoted by the programs? These questions suggested that we meet with parents in programs and find out both their motivations for participation and their perceptions and evaluations of their experience in the program. Furthermore, as outside observers, we wanted to record what happened in programs, so that we could assess our informants self-reports in light of our own observations. Finally, we wanted to interview leaders or staff members to determine how they perceived programs--what they think makes for success and who really wants parent education.

A central question of the study came to be phrased as "what is the Impact of Parent Education Programs?" We chose the concept of impact, initially as

a way of moving beyond rigorous but limited evaluation designs. Such evaluative research relies on pre- and post-treatment administration of questionnaires with pre-determined categories of information while they usually assess attainment of intended outcomes defined by program administrators or leaders. The concept of impact allowed us to discover the functionally relevant categories of information for both parents and leaders or staff, whether or not these categories of effect were intended in the program design.

We were further interested in defining our question concerning impact with the emphasis on what impact rather than on how much impact. While many evaluations had sought to measure the impact of educational intervention on attitudes or behavior of parents or on behavioral changes in children, they attempted to quantify changes which may have had little to do with what goes on in a program or how parents themselves determine and understand the changes they enact. Without observations or adequate program descriptions, "the effect" of a program could not be grounded in the experience of participants. The "changes" or lack of change testified to by evaluators may be an artifact of the research design or they may miss entirely the nature of changes that are taking place. Our hopes for doing better depended in part on the methodology of in-depth ethnographic inquiry enabling us to discover and represent participants' points of view.

We believed that the impact of a parent education program on an individual parent would depend considerably on what cultural beliefs and values, personal experiences and expectations, and other supports that an individual brought to the program. In part, an individual's motivations for participation would reflect these considerations. In part, an individual's assessments of the kind and degree of impact of a program could be explained by these kinds of cultural meanings and experiences brought to the program. We began to look

for the "match and mismatch" between program ideology and parents' cultural and social background.

Finally, we wanted to look at each parent and each program as instances of larger social and cultural changes. Determining the impact of programs in terms of parent's broader social and cultural beliefs and experiences would enable us to generate, we hoped, working hypotheses and models of cultural change concerning the evolution of families in contemporary American culture. These hypotheses and models could then be used to reorganize the premises of our investigation, successively refining and grounding our generalizations in the empirical detail of field work.

B. Conceptual Models as Typology : The Articulation Between Parent Education Programs and Changing Family Life

In order to develop conceptual models as skeletal frameworks for viewing parent education and changing American family life, we made a number of assumptions. Some of these assumptions about families have been delineated in Chapter II; but how did these assumptions about changing family life relate to different parent education programs?

First, we noted that the processes of structural and cultural change suggested in Chapter II may or may not create difficulties for all families. On their own, some families are finding new solutions, new ways of adapting to change, or are rediscovering traditional strengths which provide support. However, in the face of the kinds of changes described previously, the question of how one is to be a parent has become problematic for many families. It has also become a concern to social institutions which participate in the process of socializing children and adults. In response to this situation, the past decade has seen the emergence of a large number of organizations, including parent education programs, which define the experience of families and parents as problematic, and which seek to solve these problems in a

number of different ways.

We assumed that programs had their own assumptions about parents and about family life; that they defined the population of parents, the problem of parental responsibility, and the solution to parental needs in systematically different ways; and that these underlying ideological differences would account for the variability of programs.

Based on earlier typologies and ongoing field work, we derived three models of family change and program response. We labeled these three processes: Cultural Elaboration, Cultural Reinforcement, Cultural Reorientation. By focusing on cultural processes, we hoped to examine 1) the underlying change philosophy of a program, i.e., the program's solution; 2) the changes that the families are undergoing, i.e., the family's solution; and 3) the articulation between the solutions implemented by the programs and those initiated by parents and families. Each of these three processes constitutes a different type of change, and each solution is based on a different definition of the problem. All the solutions proposed, however, are educational in nature. They address the culture of families, for unlike legal and some therapeutic institutions, they cannot intervene directly in the structure of families.

While parent education programs may intend only one type of change, all three processes may be taking place. Parents are involved in changes before they become part of a particular parent education program. The varied cultures, needs, beliefs, and support systems of the participants all affect the direction of the changes they are experiencing. The impact of parent education must be seen as adding to, retarding, catalyzing, or changing the direction of processes through which families are evolving. The impact of a given program, then, is its positive or negative influence over those different directions of change.

The following three processes were adopted as models for viewing different parent education programs.

1. Cultural Elaboration

Many parents have been faced with profound changes in the structure of their family and in various members' relationship to work. They may find it necessary to elaborate new cultural images, values, and practices in order to adapt to their changing circumstances. Increasingly isolated from strong networks of kin, many of the traditional parenting practices have been lost or have become inapplicable. Single parents have encountered even greater disjunction between traditional cultural images and current structures of family and work. Restricted income adds to the stress of coping as parents. Rather than new images of parents and families, the media has concentrated on showing how families can coordinate day-to-day operations so that every member can continue to seek their independent fulfillment or meet their out-of-family responsibilities.

The definition of the problem which emerges, then, is that these families are falling apart or cannot coordinate increasingly independent and autonomous members of the family unit. In single parent families, one spouse has already been dispensed with, and the multiple parenting roles that the remaining spouse must take on involve a complex juggling act to resolve conflicting needs and demands for self and children. As a result, parent education, usually in the form of "parenting" courses, has arisen to come to the aid of these people. The "solution" is reworking and elaborating the parent-child relationship. Courses tend to focus on techniques: of discipline, of communication, of sex education, of sex role identification, of values clarification. The purpose of these techniques is to improve the quality of relationships between parents and children.

The nature of the change involved in the elaboration model can be described as adding to the repertoire of behaviors or techniques that can be used to deal with family and child management. There is no change in basic values, but rather the addition of new forms of dealing with child-rearing that take into account the reduction of resources available to families. Resources that become scarce can include the time taken up by increased working schedules, the decrease in income often associated with single parenthood, or the loss of the spouse's kin and friendship supports. There is no challenge of old practices that must be replaced with new ones, but rather the addition of new alternatives that can be used side-by-side with already existing ones depending on the circumstances.

2. Cultural Reinforcement

While the above changes in family structure and culture were occurring, the "traditional" nuclear family where husband is bread-winner and wife is manager of home and children decreased to a bare 16% of American households (Howard, 1978). People in traditional families did not take to minority status easily. What many found to be not only a still viable but also an optimal structure in which to raise children was being challenged by the media, by the women's movement, and by empirical evidence of family erosion among friends and acquaintances. For this group of people, the image of the family had to be either protected or revised, in order to restore confidence in their own lifestyle.

If the problem of this group is defined as society's general loss of faith in the myth of the family and a consequent diminution of the status of parents (especially the status of motherhood), then the solution is to reinforce the family by returning to traditional images or by remaking the myth. Among the former tactics are church sponsored organizations and

"grass-roots" pro-family organizations. Among the latter are advocacy gropus lobbying on behalf of parents and groups which promote the "professionalization" of motherhood. Education of parents in these groups involves political education, consciousness-raising, and ideological formation.

The nature of the change involved in the reinforcement model can be described as a renewal of the value accorded to certain practices, attitudes, and family structures. The social desirability of these values and practices is stressed, and support is sought from other people and institutions with similar attitudes to defend that way of raising children and the way of life associated with it.

3. Cultural Reorientation

Some of the most severe family "problems" have been identified among subordinate populations. According to certain critics, low-income, and/or ethnic families are failing in their basic function, to socialize children into competent human beings. The most prominent of these theories find fault either with the low income/ethnic family's structure ("the matriarchal household") or its deficient culture ("cultural deprivation"). Few anthropologists accepted these theories when they were first promulgated, and a wide-ranging critique has been carried out in their aftermath (Valentine, 1969; Leacock, 1971). Nevertheless, the theories entered into public consciousness. More importantly, they became cornerstones for many social and educational programs, primarily sponsored by the state.

If the family was failing in its socialization function, then the state would help compensate. While the baldest pronouncements found the low-income family incapable of providing a foundation for viable life as an adult, the problem was not socialization in its largest sense, but rather socialization to values and behaviors necessary for successful school and work performance.

While some programs sought to compensate "deficient" children directly, others adopted a parent education model.

In this model of parent education, parents are inadequate agents to socialize their children for successful adaptation to the dominant culture. With the problem defined in that way, the solution that presented itself is to reorient parents towards the dominant culture's educational and work-related values and to equip them with the appropriate skills to raise their children to adapt to the dominant culture.

The nature of the change involved in the reorientation model can be described as the replacement of old practices with new ones. There is an implicit assumption that the new practices require giving up incompatible old ones, that the new practices are inherently superior, or at least that they lead to better results. There may be a conflict between alternative ways of behaving that are not equivalent, but rather that lead to divergent results. The program's solution is that the old must be given up and replaced with the new which is perceived as better, more adequate, more efficient, etc.

C. Utility of the Models

A model is essentially a metaphor; it is a way of conceptualizing the world by analogy. Its basic purpose is to facilitate the recognition of patterns and similarities within data and to make statements about relationships among those patterns. FACS adopted models of cultural change based on processes which can be used to characterize both program philosophy and participants. The models take into account program intent, parents' directions of change, and staff or leader mediation, and have implications about the relationships which occur.

Comparisons between programs can be made at various levels, the most important of which concerns program's underlying assumptions. Since different organizations define the problems affecting families in different ways, the programmatic efforts they adopt to solve those problems also vary. Programs can be designed to effect a particular type of change, and we expect certain organizational features to be associated with different models. For example, in the Effective Parenting Course parents are defined as lacking specific "tools" that enhance the parent-child relationship, a problem which may be "solved" by a Cultural Elaboration program. The Association of Mothers uses a Cultural Reinforcement model. It defines lack of support for the stay-home mothers as a problem for some middle-class women.Their solution is to provide a forum where mothers with similar values can interact. The Mother Child Development Program defines preparation of children for school as a problem for Mexican-American families. The solution is to teach mothers the values and behaviors that the program believes they lack.

D. Case Study of Programs as Instances of the Conceptual Models.

Our initial research questions called for collecting information on the formal properties (etic dimensions) of programs and discovering what where the functionally relevant categories (emic dimensions) of experience for the participants, both staff and parents. We expected each of these kinds of information to help flesh out the models of cultural change which we posited underlay the different programs we would study.

An attempt has been made to keep the presentation of each case study parallel to the others. There were, nevertheless, substantive differences between each program which not only suggested differential emphases on different sections, but also made for slight differences in the narrative.

CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGY

A. Site Selection and Field Plan Implementation.

The parent education programs selected for this study were chosen to represent a cross-section of the types of programs found to be in operation in our research area. The programs available for study were found to be representative of the programs reported in recent parent education literature. A working typology classified the programs in the area as "complex" or "simple" based on a series of organizational features. Details of this work have been reported elsewhere.(Family and Community Studies Addendum, submitted to NIE June, 1978)

The final selection of the three programs reported here was based on that typology but also represented potential instances of the emerging models of cultural change. It also represents a compromise between our desires and the actual willingness to cooperate on the part of the program "gatekeepers".

The details of negotiation for entry and actual field work will be omitted from this paper. We will restrict this methodology chapter to a brief treatment of some important issues associated with ethnographic research.

B. Team Ethnography.

In the initial phases of theoretical discussions, research design, and implementation of field study, the three members of the FACS team collaborated closely in order to achieve a unity of purpose and action. With the initiation of field study in several sites, a division of labor among the FACS researchers arose. One researcher, Andrea Meditch, assumed the major responsibility for observation of activities in the Association of Mothers. Kevin Batt assumed major responsibility for observation of the MCDP, with Renato Espinoza sharing this task. Renato Espinoza took the main responsibility for observation of the RCPCA parenting course with Andrea Meditch sharing this task. This division of labor resulted from the particular qualifications each researcher brought to the sites, qualifications which were deemed the most appropriate for entree and rapport with informants; e.g., a woman makes the best researcher in one site, speaking Spanish is best suited for the second site, while being a parent is required for the third.

To balance this assignment of separate responsibilities, each researcher participated in some data collection in each site. Each researcher engaged in a small amount of observation in sites where he/she did not have major responsibility.

C. Nature and Categories of Data: Ethnographic Approach

Each parent education program was conceived as an aggregate of human beings, who, over the course of time, develop a more or less patterned and a more or less shared system for understanding one another. This conceptualization is underscored by a number of assumptions about what happens when human beings come together in social groups. First, it presupposes that each person entering a particular social scene will bring with him or her an already extant body of knowledge, understandings, behaviors, speech styles, and orientations to what is going on around them. Second, that this background orientation or culture will not be shared equally with others. Third, that human beings work to understand or make sense out of what is going on around them. Fourth, that this work of understanding one another is based on observable social behavior which is accessible to interactants and is therefore available to be interpreted by them. Fifth, that it is this flow of social action and interaction, and the informal logic of this flow, which constitutes the culture of the group.

This conceptualization had specific implications for the way FACS approached the study of parent education programs. Most importantly, it implied the need to base analyses on what the participants think is going on or, more accurately, on researchers' interpretations of what they think is going on.

The analysis of data collected for this study incorporates both the emic and etic approaches to conceptualization. By emic we are referring to analysis from the point of view of the participants' ways of categorizing and attributing meaning to the events of their lives. Emic analyses attempt to discover how people construe their world from the way they talk about it.

D. Interviewing and observing

Interviewing program participants was seen as the most important source of data for the research. To insure comparable quality data for all sites, interview schedules were developed for both parents and staff that would be applicable to all programs. The same general interview strategies and analytical procedures were used with both types of interviews.

It was decided that the most important interview strategy was to find areas in which interviewee and interviewer could communicate extensively, in which the interviewee volunteered information rather than always being elicited. The instructions stressed the researcher's interest in finding out about the experiences of parents, and in particular mothers. The general order of the interview questions was designed to ease the conversation by starting with those things parents feel most knowledgeable about, their children. The next section dealt with some of their feelings about motherhood and moved to explore their perception of the resources available to them as parents. From there, the interview moved to the specifics about the program, inquiring about previous experiences and details of their current participation.

The observation of program activities varied from site to site. The nature of the event being observed made the role of the observer more or less salient. In the case of the MCDP, where the same group of people met daily, the presence of the observer was obvious. In the EPC, the observers maintained a low-key profile as participants in the group. Many of the Association of Mothers functions were public, so the presence of the observer was not noticed by most people.

E. Data Analysis

The data gathered consisted primarily of interview protocols, field notes, and written documents produced by or about the organizations under study. The interview data are self reports about facts, perceptions, and feelings that respondents disclose. Field notes are records of public events that were observed, records of conversations, and observer impressions and interpretations of various social events. Documents provided some information about the formal properties of the organizations. All these sources of data contain categories of information necessary for analysis. In order to group, classify and analyze this wealth of data, FACS developed a preliminary set of coding categories intended to be applicable in varying degrees to all three data sources. As the analysis proceeded, some coding categories were added, others deleted, and other merged.

As data collection proceeded, analysis tended to lag behind. Built into the data collection was an implicit team analysis approach. The procedures mentioned above helped guarantee the quality of data gathered, but also increased the work for the team. The division of major responsibility for site specific research made each team member an "expert" on at least one site, though by no means the sole source of information on any given site. In the traditional discourse of anthropology, ethnology is the comparative study of cultures undertaken by ethnographers whose expertise is limited to one or perhaps a small number of cultures. Generalizations about human behavior and social life are tested by each ethnographer in terms of that culture he is most familiar with. With a much more limited focus, FACS researchers engaged in ethnological comparison of parent educa-

tion sites. Relying on their particular field experience, each researcher could generate hypotheses and react to others' hypotheses concerning the common features of parent education across sites and the systematic differences between sites.

Conclusions about impact are not based on an empirical pre- and post-test measure, but derive from 1) self-reported statements by participants concerning changes in their ideas or behaviors, and 2) analyses conducted by researchers of match and mismatch between changes intended by programs and changes that parents reported.

The self-report information from participants represents a particular kind of information. Information concerning program effect that was spontaneously offered by participants was seen as especially significant. Information that was elicited by interviewers' more extended probing was seen as of secondary importance, since parents were responding to pre-determined "effects" suggested by interviewers' questions. When very little information was forthcoming from parents during interviews, then the impact of the program in a particular area of change was considered negligible. Out of these analyses of transcripts, case examples of participants and general statements of impact were derived.

F. Interpretation: Synthesizing Analyses into Case Studies

After spending a considerable amount of time getting familiarized with the places and people that we studied, observing regularities and unusual events, and interviewing a sample of them in a face-to-face situation, the task of making sense of the information gathered was formidable. An equally consuming task is communicating our research to a reader. We have

chosen to present our findings for each program in detailed form as case studies. For the purposes of this paper, a very limited description of each program will be presented. Here, we will concentrate on the examination of each program as a case of the conceptual models of cultural change proposed.

The sections on Program Impact have been taken from the full report to be submitted to NIE and are presented following a brief desciption of each program. The reader of this abridged version will miss the more detailed treatment of the formal organizational characteristics of each program. Also absent here is our detailed examination of the parental concerns that bring parents and staff together and often separate them, and which constitute the reason for the existence of these human organizations.

CHAPTER V: THE CASE STUDIES: CULTURAL ELABORATION IN THE EFFECTIVE PARENTING COURSE (EPC)

A. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

The River City Parent-Child Association regularly sponsors a course on parent education. The courses meet once a week, for six weeks in a variety of community settings. Participants pay a fee. A trained facilitator runs the course, following a Manual of discussion topics, ranging from discipline to problem-solving to childhood sexuality. While the Curriculum Manual specifies general topics, the format of the class is open to the expression of parental concerns.

The Effective Parenting Course has evolved from several years of activity. One of the founders of the River City Parent-Child Association, a counseling psychologist in private practice, teamed up with a colleague in the MH-MR Department to structure the courses and write the Manual.

The course goals are described in the Manual as "to introduce and practice a variety of parental tools, tools that make life easier for both parents and children", and by the course facilitator as " an opportunity to present some information that participants can apply to their own lives and to allow them to talk about the things that are bothering them and to get feedback".

The course observed was offered through the Community School System and was held during consecutive Wednesday evenings. It was directed to parents of children two to six years of age. A "couple fee" was designed to encourage enrollment by husbands as well. There were no other restrictions.

The evening hours were designed to allow participation by working parents. Announcements for the course were made using city-wide radio and TV Public Service Announcements and press releases to city media. The Community Schools listed the Effective Parenting Course among their regular offerings. The sponsoring organization, RCPCA, announced the course in its regular monthly Newsletter and it was also listed in other family and parent-oriented organizations in the city. Examination of data for the group of participants under study revealed that participants had responded to the following recruitment mechanisms: two participants saw TV Spots, two were referred from other RCPCA activities (Potty Training and Lamaze classes), one was referred by Planned Parenthood, one was referred by a friend who was a member of RCPCA, one was referred by a private marriage and family counselor, and one was referred by a Welfare Department Case Worker.

Prior to formal enrollment, the participants were contacted by the RCPCA Course Coordinator and by the Course Instructor. The purpose of this contact was to make sure that the children were within the age range for the course and to establish a personal contact with the Instructor, who attempted to determine the overall nature of the parental concerns prior to the beginning of the sessions.

A total of fourteen individuals participated in the course at one time or another. All participants were Anglo. In terms of gender, marital and occupational status, the following breakdown describes the group:
a. Three couples in which the wife stayed home with the children started the course. One husband did not return to the second session. Another couple is special; the wife is a full-time graduate student, now staing

home with the children for the summer session.

b. There were three single (divorced) working mothers. One mother did not return after the first session due to illness and babysitting problems.

c. There was one working mother not accompanied by her husband.

d. There were three stay-at-home mothers, not accompanied by their husbands.

The participants came from all areas of the city, including at least two suburban developments outside city limits. The occupations of the working members of the families included clerical workers with large industries, CPAs, real estate sales people, mortgage loan officer, a computer programmer, a state bureaucrat, and a college instructor. Nome of the participants was making use of welfare assistance. They lived in middle income apartment complexes and single family homes in suburban areas.

Only one participant had three children. Three participants had one child and the rest had two. The most common combination was two children, one four and one two years old. The child of one couple was below the recommended age for the course, their oldest child being only nineteen months old. They had been able to convince the RCPCA Course Coordinator that they would profit from the course because their girl was already exhibiting the behavior typical of the "terrible two's."

Only two participants, a couple, had been born, raised, educated, and employed in River City most of their lives. The rest were born elsewhere, as far away as California. Most had been raised and educated in different cities in the state. The group can be characterized as recently arrived to the city. With only one exception, all the participants had from three to six years of life together before becoming parents.

B. PROGRAM IMPACT

1. Evaluative Comments

The participant's evaluation of the seven sessions of the EPC were explored during the personal interviews. The interviews were scheduled before the end of the series of sessions in order to maximize the chances of cooperation from the participants, since the interviewers were the two FACS researchers attending the sessions.

The questions in the interview designed to explore the effects of participation attempted first to elicit recall of the topics dealt with in the session already completed with neutral probes such as...What did you think about that (the topic she/he happened to recall)? If necessary, the interviewer prompted a reaction by recalling the general topic, such as ..."Well in the first two sessions we talked about children's needs... What did you think about that?" The interviewers probed for specific examples of concepts, techniques or facts that the respondents could mention as support for an opinion, such as, "It was very useful." Statements like that were followed with a probe such as, "Can you give an example?" Some specific questions and probes were directed to detect changes in the respondent's own parenting behavior and beliefs, her/his spouse's and the children's behaviors. The changes in behavior mentioned were usually the result of applying some principle or technique discussed during the sessions, and the questions attempted to determine their relative effectiveness and the satisfaction of the participant with the results.

After probing for recall and statements about the general or specific contents of the sessions, respondents were asked about their feelings about

the format of the session, such as, "Did you have any feelings about the way in which (the contents) were presented in the sessions?" This question produced responses relevant to their feelings and opinions about both the general format of the sessions and about the performance of the instructor. A final set of questions relating to content and format of the sessions attempted to determine if there was anything in the course that conflicted with the participant's own values or beliefs, such as, "Are there any things that you disagree with that have been talked about in the sessions?"

The general satisfaction/dissatisfaction with participation was explored by asking participants if they related or discussed the proceedings of the sessions with their respective spouses, and if they had mentioned their participation to friends or other acquaintances. Finally, direct questions such as, "Would you recommend this course to a friend?" elicited some additional evaluative statements.

The evaluative comments of the participants, elicited near the end of the course, were closely related to their expectations about the course and the instructor and their preferred styles of learning. They are often highly subjective and in many cases balanced by another participant who felt just the opposite.

a. Class Contents

The most enthusiastic response to the class content came from the three participants with the lowest educational attainment. One said:

> ...(talking about children's needs) made me think because I really hadn't thought that much when my child is doing something it was because they have a need.... I just thought... this kid is driving me crazy, but I didn't think, well, there is a reason.

This mother, like many others, also recalled specific concepts or aspects of the content that were particularly important because they agreed with some previously held beliefs. In this case she mentioned the importance of providing a special environment where her children could explore and play with relative freedom. She also mentioned a specific concept, that of testing (as in children testing a rule) as particularly novel and useful to her.

A second mother expected to get some knowledge to help her understand what children go through and what they are feeling. She said:

> ...(The sessions on children's needs) were well done, as far as I didn't really know all that. You know, what his needs were and it helped me understand a lot better and cope with my feelings toward the way he is reacting. 'Cause it would get to he'd react and I'd react 'cause I didn't understand and it would feed back to him and he'd react worse and it could go on and on and on till the roof fell off, you know...

A third mother came to the course hoping to get some more parenting skills and some more insight to help her organize some information she had obtained from some parenting books she had read. She felt that the course made...

> ...a lot of the information out of Dobson and different books that I had read clear, and it all kind of fit together. ...Especially the part about the needs, where it tells you where behavior is coming from. To me that meant a lot more. That was something that I hadn't even thought about and I began to examine my own needs, and to apply the same theory to me, and I have also begun to see that everything that we are teaching as applied to children can be applied to people in general...and if we all did it then I think that the whole world would be a nicer place (laughs).

Several participants mentioned various specific concepts and segments of the sessions as valuable. These included, in addition to children's needs, tools for discipline, quiet correction, use of explanations and communication, rules, children's testing of rules, being consistent, and

child-proofing the home and setting up a special place for the children.

The most negative comments came from participants who did not find their expectations fulfilled. One felt he had not learned any specific technique, just some general notions, and that too much time had been spent on what he termed "psychotherapy," meaning discussions among members in a mutually supportive fashion. He expected a classroom atmosphere, where he could take notes and learn from a highly trained and authoritative source some specific techniques.

The two other participants who felt most disappointed about the content felt that they had not really learned anything new, but just some new labels for what they already knew. This couple, one of only two couples participating, mentioned as positive elements selected aspects of the content that fit into their own personal agendas; both sought in the group outside support to bolster their positions in their conflict as mother and father. She liked the idea that there should be a few important rules and he liked the acceptance of spanking as one occasional resource (as opposed to an outright ban to it as a discipline tool). Both considered themselves more educated than the rest of the group and gave the impression of placing high value in intellectual pursuits. In consequence, they judged the overall course as being below their standards, and had expected a more theoretical or higher level treatment of the topics, more in line with a college type course. Their actual behavior during the sessions, however, did not show any reluctance to participate in the format chosen or at the level that the course was conducted.

b. Class Format

The Course Instructor was asked by one of the researchers about the patterns of interaction that had developed in the course after four sessions had elapsed. She had expressed her intention to deviate from the style of a previous course in which she had been a participant. She said:

> It is kind of a different style. I wanted to give more content that the people could talk about, rather than allowing people to go off on as many tangents. I found it a little frustrating as a participant (in that previous course). This is just a different way of teaching, a different style. I think (the previous instructor) got across the content, but I felt like I wanted to put more content at the beginning of the course and then let people talk about that relating it to themselves. It hasn't really turned out that way. I had planned to present some content and then have the discussion with every session. I have wanted to make some points, and see what they thought about them, and then let them talk about them, rather than kind of waiting for people to make the points themselves, which I know is a valid teaching method, but I just wasn't comfortable with it.

The opinions of the participants about what happened during the sessions varied substantially. There was agreement that a good deal of interaction and participation took place. Whether this was positive or negative reflected the expectations and needs of each participant. One expected to be:

> ...somewhere where I could maybe talk. I got it. I got a lot of help, and I think perhaps that is what I needed right then because it was an environment I didn't feel so threatened.

She continues later:

> ...I kind of liked it. I like a discussion group. I like it where people can get up and feel free to talk and say what they mean.

Another mother felt that all the participants were talkers. She found herself participating:

> I know I even talked a lot, more than I ever had anywhere. It just seemed that there was a lot of talking. Normally, I won't

> say anything...but somehow I just felt like you could--it was nice 'cause it was an easy atmosphere like you could say something if you felt strongly about something.

She did not like the time that some people took delving into their own problems, such as toilet training or marital differences, because those were not her concerns. Overall, however, she found the content of the contributions important:

> I think it kind of feels good to hear someone else talk about all the problems they have, and you think, well, you are not that bad after all, you know.

Similar feelings were expressed by the man who felt that the theoretical level of the course content was too low. He felt, however, that:

> ...It is nice to hear that other people are having the same difficulties that you. In a molecular society (sic) that is a definite weakness; it used to be that you would have a grandparent or a great grandparent you could turn to. But we don't necessarily have it anymore. You discuss it some, you know, with friends and stuff, but we don't have that--that sharing and that resource available to us.

At least three participants spontaneously lamented the fact that too much time was spent dealing with the specific problems of two or three participants, in effect decreasing the chances of participation for the other people. It is indeed ironic, however, that one of those who complained about others taking too much time was the mother who brought the single most discussed case, and who herself participated the most.

With few exceptions, the participants liked the opportunity to exchange views, and were often surprised that they were sharing for the first time some feelings and concerns they had. The criticisms can be attributed to the failure of the course instructor to control the interactions to allow more people to participate, and the relative short time available for the course. It is clear that the Instructor's original goal of combining

expository lecture/presentations of topics with audience participation was realized only partially.

c. The Instructor

The evaluative comments offered by participants about the Course Instructor varied considerably, and in many cases the opinions were divided. One mother responded when asked about how she thought the leader was handling the course:

> I think she did pretty well. She kept the conversation pretty much on the point and open where everybody participated. She didn't talk a lot herself, but I think she was very concerned, I could see that, especially with her own (problems). But I think everyone of us in there were concerned about out own problems, and we tried to give out as much, put out as much as we could. I kind of liked it. I like a discussion group. I like it where people can get up and feel free to talk and say what they mean.

A conflicting view of the group dynamics was provided by a mother who said:

> One thing we noticed about the delivery of the course and its structure was that perhaps (the Instructor) was not all that experienced in leading groups. I still wonder about her resources, because so much seems to have come from one or two books, when I did a bibliography and there are many, many books.

She continues:

> She (the Instructor) does most of the talking, and uses her own child as an awful lot of the examples. She knows the point she is trying to make, but it might be more useful if you can get it out of a student-teacher situation and make it more a sharing.

This general negative evaluation of the Instructor extended to the content of the course for dealing mainly with topics that she was already familiar with. She mentioned being in groups before in another city and having been an orientation leader and thus familiar with some psychological

terminology. The overall dissatisfaction can be easily understood because the course did not meet the expectations that this participant had for authoritative advice. She wanted to settle long standing differences with her husband concerning the approach and philosophy (what she called "the framework") for their parenting. She was quick to mention as positive and to use several specific incidents in which the leader's position coincided with hers, and thus served her purposes.

Several participants coincided in their evaluation of the discussion part of the course. They all felt it was a very important and valuable part of the experience, but that it could have been conducted better by the Instructor. Some blamed her inexperience for her difficulty to control topics that deviated some and to control some participants that talked more than their share of the available time. The overall impression that the leader left with the group can be best summarized in the comments of one mother:

> I didn't know quite what to expect from the course. I expected more concrete solutions. I think it was sort of dumb to expect that, looking back on it. I guess I expected the leader to be a little bit more authoritative. In the middle of the course, I sort of regretted that it wasn't a psychologist teaching the course, but since then, I really think (the Instructor) is really good, and I think her real strong point is getting people to talk. And for me, I think that's been a real help, the talking that people do. The ideas that the other parents shared have been really invaluable besides showing me that I'm not the only one.

Later in the interview she commented on the fact that the Instructor too seemed to be changing her own style of parenting:

> ...about having her daughter clean the room and all that, she sort of came around. I really admire her for sort of getting up there and talking about everything and explaining what she is doing and how she has changed and I liked that.

A final personal and professional evaluation of the Instructor and her style

followed a recommendation for more balance between lecture and discussion during the sessions. She then added:

> I do like her, I have come to like her more since I've gotten to know her and to see what she is doing. I really like her as a person and for being able to be so open about her own experiences and being sort of bubbly and able to get people to talk.

2. Program Impact

In Chapter III we included a narrative account of the development of our conceptual framework. We started by asking some general questions about parent education programs, such as what was happening to parents that made them seek these programs, what happened in the programs that satisfied them, and whose interest a given program was promoting. At this point we are in a position to begin to answer those questions.

The parents who came and enrolled in the Effective Parenting class were recent arrivals to the city, did not have relatives around, and for the most part had few friends, if any, who were also parents. They were living in a state of social and emotional isolation. Their children are normal, most between the ages of two and four, and are undergoing changes in their behavior that their parents find puzzling and often annoying. In the absence of friends or kin who could provide advice or at least confirmation that their predicament is normal, these parents have done some reading seeking knowledge and techniques to deal with their children. Still, they are not satisfied and expect that a class, with an authoritative instructor, will be a better way to get the knowledge they seek. Some also expect to be able to interact with other parents and compare experiences.

Some of the participants carry positive memories of their own childhood,

and are trying to continue the models that their parents used. Yet, some details and specific techniques are missing, and they expect the course to supply them. Another group of parents have negative memories of their upbringing and are even more in need to fill in the gaps and to develop a model that will avoid the negative experiences they had. All the participants hold a middle of the road ideology of child rearing, somewhere between strict controls and permissiveness. They want their children to grow up to be independent and responsible, achievement-oriented, good people. And yet, right now, many find themselves unable to control them without resorting to verbal or physical violence. They feel that this is not right, but they don't know what to do. Thus, they come and meet with other parents who share some of those same concerns, under the leadership of an instructor who is also a mother, just like them. Although not as authoritative as many would have liked, her performance succeeds in teaching some basic concepts and in illustrating an array of alternative techniques that parents can use to control themselves and manage the behavior of their children. In the process, many parents find emotional support and confirmation that their predicament is not unique and in some cases that they are in not such bad shape after all. The group, self-selected, is heterogeneous in composition. All the participants are Anglo and middle class, but they include two fathers, two single mothers, and one married working mother. The other half of the women present are stay-at-home mothers.

The most severe stress is found among those mothers who have two or more children and are home alone all day. In three cases their self-control is all that prevents them from being abusive mothers. One has already been reported to welfare officials, and her attendance at the course is part of

her efforts to find a way out. In all cases the husbands have failed to provide necessary support and relief. Only one of those fathers attended the course, and in his case it was as part of a more general effort to hold the family together, since he was also experiencing severe marital difficulties.

Single working mothers experience a great deal of stress. In one case examined here, stress is complicated by a very negative relationship with her older child and a poor self-concept that increases her isolation, not only as a mother, but also as a woman.

It may be surprising to some to find that in those couples where both husband and wife work outside the home, the problems are less severe. They have achieved a sharing arrangement, and their presence in the course was more to iron out style and content differences and to enrich a home life that is already considerably better than that of the other parents.

We can summarize the structural and situational factors that contribute to the total stress experienced by the participants in this course. These factors are presented also in order from the most prevalent to the least common in the group studied. First, social and emotional isolation. Second, lack of or limited participation of the husband/father because of unwillingness or absence. Third, a negative memory of their own childhood, functioning as a negative reference. Fourth, number of children. Fifth, relative economic scarcity, associated with limited educational and occupational skills. Sixth, marital problems. The more of these factors or situations present, the greater was the stress in the family life of these mothers.

The curriculum for the course is broad and represents a mainstream,

eclectic position based on a pragmatic view of "what has been shown to work with parents." The concepts advanced blend a dash of behaviorism, a bit of Addlerian psychology with a humanistic touch. Parents are invited to contribute to this pot-luck supper, a cafeteria style service where each take what looks appetizing. There is little in the course that could offend anyone, no radical views or positions that could clash with deep-rooted religious beliefs or values that are part of middle-class American culture. On a superficial level, both stay-at-home mothers and working mothers could agree on all the basic principles, and the only difference between them would be the amount of time that they have chosen to spend with their children.

This program is part of a market economy in which self-selected parents who are hurting go shopping for a cure. It is based on the belief held by the River City Parent Child Association that the behavioral sciences can contribute to the improvement of family life by translating scientific principles into "practical tools" that any parent can use. It takes the form of a small group where with the use of straight pedagogical principles some concepts and techniques can be taught to adults.

This classroom format is combined with some of the advantages of small group dynamics. The interpersonal exchanges that occur never reach psychotherapeutic levels, but there is a definite feeling of emotional support and "groupiness." Finally, all participants have made a personal, financial and emotional commitment when they sign up. They commit themselves to be open to consider alternatives; they pay a fee for their participation and incur expenses in order to attend, including babysitting and gasoline. They are buying a service and judging from the interviews, everybody got

enough to make it worth their time and money.

This type of program has tried to be attractive and useful to fathers. However, it is clear from our conversations with some of the participants that making attendance by the fathers mandatory would only succeed in barring some of the women who needed the most help. It is clear that the best hope for finally increasing the role of the father in the care and socialization of his children will come from the increased participation of women in the labor force. It is only then, by necessity and by virtue of the greater power of the wife and mother in the family, that the father is forced to do his fair share. This increased participation is not devoid of problems, but the relief valve that a full-fledged father can provide could easily solve many of the problems of the stay-at-home mothers, and it can be in itself gratifying to the fathers and children.

If we define impact as the articulation between a program's ideology and what it offers, and the needs of those it serves, then the impact of the Effective Parenting Course is significant. It would be naive to expect that without reinforcement the concepts and techniques it provided parents will stay very long with them. Unless their social isolation is broken, these families will continue at risk. The program itself offers no special continuing support network. The referrals to participants to seek individual help might succeed in breaking present patterns of behavior. Its city-wide character makes it unlikely that any neighborhood friendship or support group could result from any course, given the size of the metropolitan area that it covers. Church or work-place related groups could provide the support needed at a human scale. The need is there.

C. THE EFFECTIVE PARENTING COURSE AS CULTURAL ELABORATION

The information that we have collected about the Effective Parenting Course and the people that participated can now be used to complete the picture of the model of change proposed as underlying the program and its participants.

In our original conceptualization of the Cultural Elaboration Model, we had assumed that the major source of change in the families would be in terms of structure, especially single parent families, and in terms of greater participation of women in the labor force. Although the course was held in the evenings in order to allow these types of parents to participate, the majority of women who came represented the traditional father-working/ mother-at-home-with-the-children nuclear family.

We expected that the participants would not be rejecting the parenting models with which they were raised, but rather attempting to improve them, to expand the tools and techniques, to elaborate further something that was already part of the mainstream American culture. We found some parents like that. However, we also found a large number of people who were rejecting the models of their parents and were engaged in a change of values, actively trying to avoid verbal and physical violence with their children.

All the participants accepted their personal responsibility for their behavior as parents, and their presence in the course was an attempt to change themselves. In most cases, the mothers participating had taken it upon themselves to improve the quality of their family life in spite of their husbands' incapacity or unwillingness to participate. Thus, for most of the participants in this course, it was an elaboration of mothering,

but without any change in fathering.

This program operates on the parent-child relationship, or rather, on the mother-child relationship. In and by itself, it succeeded only temporarily to break the isolation of these families. Because it is not located near residential units, its chances of forming lasting friendships is not very high.

Participation in this course was only one of the things these families were doing to improve the quality of their lives. One participant has continued to enlarge her circle of friends and support by becoming active in the River City Parent Child Association. Another has pursued the formation of a local chapter of Parents Anonymous in her efforts to rehabilitate herself. Another expressed intentions to seek marital counseling to prevent a family breakup that was being aggravated by their problems with their children.

As we expected, the curriculum and ideology of the class represents a pragmatic assortment of concepts and techniques borrowed from various authors. There is no contradiction between alternative approaches because a certain diversity in the parents that are attracted is assumed. Spanking is not ruled out, but other techniques are offered that can be used instead. The problem-solving approach promoted is nothing new, except that parents seldom take the time to reflect on their practices. The class provided that necessary detachment for a few hours that allowed parents to reflect on their behavior and compare it with ideal models or with the behavior of other real life parents. That time-out may be the program's greatest contribution to the socialization of these parents. Until now, they have been learning on-the-job, and in the class they found an opportunity to

step aside and look at themselves and their spouses.

The program, because of its short duration, cannot be expected to produce long lasting effects by itself. Its effectiveness, however, is enhanced by the readiness for change of its participants. All were aware that something was not working right and had some idea about where they wanted to go and where they did not want to go. Luckily for them, the program offered support for their choice of model and provided the necessary details to make it work better.

On the negative side, we found that a number of traditional nuclear families where the wife stays at home are at risk. In all the cases that we studied, the husbands had a restricted participation in child care and socialization. They could make the difference between stress and happiness. However, it is not the job of the program to get fathers to participate, but rather to help them learn how to participate and how to reach an understanding on values and techniques with their spouses. It seems clear that only a shift in women's participation in waged work will move fathers closer to their children. It is indeed ironic that too much time alone with your children can be dangerous, but this was the case with the mothers we saw.

Finally, we need to focus our attention on those families who have accomplished this rearrangement in their parenting responsibilities, to identify and describe how this took place and what are the problems and strengths in their family life. We need to look at this "new father" and at the "new mother" that is emerging, and document the changes in their parental roles. In the process, we may discover what are the successful strategies that make it unnecessary for these parents to seek the help of programs such as this one and pass the word to those just beginning the road to parenthood.

CHAPTER VI: THE CASE STUDIES: CULTURAL REINFORCEMENT IN THE ASSOCIATION OF MOTHERS

A. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE ORGANIZATION

The Association of Mothers is an organization of approximately 200 mothers of primarily preschool or young school-age children. The organization was started in 1976 by one woman and was designed to meet the needs of middle-class Anglo mothers. It is financially supported through three types of membership dues which may be paid yearly (Annual Members), by meeting (Associates), or only for the newsletter (Subscribers). There is no paid staff; the leadership consists of a board of directors elected each year. The organization sponsors monthly meetings open to the general public, with invited speakers who talk on a variety of topics concerning mothers and children. The board meets once a month to plan these meetings and to discuss other periodic activities such as garage sales and conferences. In addition, three smaller neighborhood groups open only to members meet once a month in members' homes in north, northwest, and south River City. Finally, all Members and Subscribers receive a monthly newsletter.

Over the course of the development of the Association of Mothers, the location of general meetings changed several times. The reasons for changing the locations reveals something of the nature of the organization and their values. The first public meeting was held in a local women's center affiliated with a national women's rights group. It was the only meeting held there because the leaders felt that the center represented a feminist orientation which might discourage some of the women they wished to attract. In addition, several people pointed out that it was "downtown," which was described as being dangerous. These women said their husbands would not permit them to go "downtown" after dark.

The philosophy as represented in the brochures has changed somewhat since the inception of the group to include a greater awareness of women working outside the home. This awareness was not part of the original design which was exclusively for mothers who stay at home. The original brochure stated that the objectives of the group were to:

> "provide a forum for discussion of common concerns related to the psychological and creative growth of women with children.
>
> "provide a support group for all mothers and particularly for women who have made a conscious decision to be at home and who have definite goals towards achieving success as a mother-person.
>
> "places a high priority on home life and is dedicated to raising the status of motherhood in a realistic way, by challenging the myths of that institution.
>
> "believes in maintaining contact with current issues. This will be reflected in the variety of topics and invited speakers.
>
> "as a group with special interests and special representation, will monitor and react to public affairs..."

Several important features of these objectives are immediately obvious. First, the Association speaks to the mother who is at home. Stay-at-home mothers presuppose the financial ability of the family to support an unpaid woman; in short, the objectives speak to the middle income family with husband as breadwinner and with the wife at home with the children. Second, it focuses on women, not on the children. It is concerned with the "mother-person," with the development of the woman's psychological and creative potential, rather than her children's cognitive and social growth. Third, the institution of stay-at-home mothering and the value of the home is explicitly supported. In general, the objectives focus on two different aspects: the reinforcement of traditional mothering and exposing women to current issues and a variety of topics.

B. PROGRAM IMPACT

1. Evaluating Participation

Middle class women who attend Association meetings share a number of parental concerns. The mothers as a group tend to be well-educated, affluent, and almost without exception to have worked for wages in primarily professional occupations prior to the birth of their first child. We have argued that the cultural and economic climate of the middle class in the U.S. has contributed to creation of conflict or stress for mothers who were formerly working professionals: they are 'reclassified' as low status persons. A more detailed look at the social context of these mothers and at the parental values and concerns that they hold will clarify the interaction between the goals and philosophy of the organization and the impact that it has on its participants.

"Isolation" and the feeling that motherhood is an "endurance test" are the two major concerns of the mothers who participate in the Association. The state of isolation, as they have described it, represents unsupportive social context. The second major area of concern, what we have called the mother-child "endurance test," represents conflicts within the belief system of the middle class. These two concerns combine to create a situation with little opportunity for reducing the stress. The cultural norms this group of women have accepted dictate that proper care of children in the Anglo middle class is possible only if mothers care for them full time and in the home. Further, mothers are expected to be the exclusive care-givers. However, within the middle class, high status is accorded to those who earn money from their work, that is, to those who participate in the waged labor

force. Going from paid professional careers to unwaged (low status) jobs as mothers creates a concern. The conflicting values, which are supported by the context in which the mother finds herself, result in concerns or problems which may be special to middle class Anglo women with professional backgrounds. This combination of an unsupportive social context and a conflicting value system creates what might loosely be called a double bind (Bateson, 1972), where the mother is trapped into maintaining the very situation which is creating her stress. This set of parental concerns constitutes the primary motivation for founding and building the organization, as well as its major topics of concern, and the motivation for members to continue to participate.

The response of the organization to the conflicting concerns of these middle class mothers is to provide a "time out." As the brochures and often the newsletters say: "If you need a night out," "come relax and just have a good time away from it all." It combines this with a focus on "doing something just for you," a focus on the mother as a person, her feelings and needs. It provides mothers a time to get away from the kids and the housework as well as a forum which considers her important. The Association gives the middle class Anglo mother "time away" to focus on something for herself and at the same time reassures her about what she is doing by treating her job as important, by "professionalizing" motherhood.

The Association allows the participants to maintain their original "choice" of staying home by acting essentially as a pressure valve. It reinforces the very conditions which lead to stress, full-time motherhood in the isolated context of the nuclear family, but it makes the stress more bearable by providing occasional escape from the pressure and by

creating a community of people who share the same experience.

The audience to which the organization addresses itself is not career women, is not "average housewives," but those who gave up membership in the (male) professional/business world to engage in full-time motherhood.

The experience of members differs somewhat from that of the leaders because depending on the type of membership, many aspects of the organization are not experienced by them. These differential experiences affect leaders and members perceptions of themselves as participants, or at least the way they talk about themselves.

Both leaders and members report that meeting with people like themselves, who share their values, experiences and feelings was very important. Yet, in spite of their similar backgrounds, there are differences: leaders report that a valuable aspect of their participation is that they feel more self confidence and have learned new skills and knowledge.

This differential impact can be understood because leaders have access to and participate in making the organization work, thereby learning new skills and knowledge. In addition, they are in regular and intimate contact with other board members who articulate the ideology of the organization, so they become socialized into talking about their experiences in similar ways. This increased contact, shared language, and new skills have resulted in the reported increased feeling of self confidence.

Members, on the other hand, are not as well integrated into the organization and do not have as many opportunities to interact with others. They go to fewer meetings, are involved in fewer projects, are not as aware of the structure or of the different activities of the group. As a result they get to meet and know fewer people than board members and are not exposed to the

ideology or operation of the organization to the same degree. Still, they consider the experience of meeting new people to be the most important benefit of their participation.

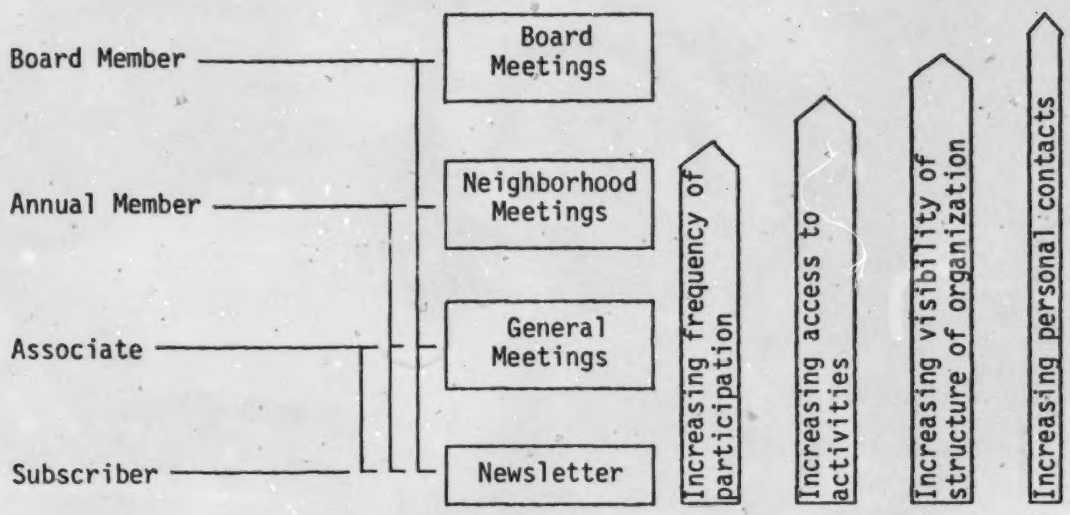
The similarities in background, experience and impact stem from the class extraction of the group. Although it is a voluntary association, and one which does not recruit based on rigid entrance requirements, there is a great degree of homogeneity among the participants. Unlike many parent education programs, leaders and members share the same socioeconomic and educational background. Within the organization, this homogeneity results in a great deal of permeability between the different membership categories. One kind of member is not prevented from becoming a different type of member due to class, income, educational or ethnic differences. Instead, all it takes is increased time committed and/or slightly higher fees. This is also true to become a board member; all it takes is extra time and desire. In reality it also requires that the individual contact or be contacted by the board, and as we have seen, greater adherence to the "style" of the mothers who already make up the organization.

Different access to the organization's activities and ideology explain the experiences that leaders and members report as participants in the organization. The following chart shows the relationship between the different membership categories, access to activities, and the effects of this differential access.

In summary, members and leaders are similar in terms of values, concerns, background, class and ethnicity. What the leaders get that members don't is access to and experience with the male professional model which characterizes the organization.

CHART A

Membership, Access to Activities and Reported Impact



2. The Association's Impact

The information we have collected through our observations of many aspects of the organization and through interviews with its leaders and members allows us to answer questions that we posed at the beginning of our study. We wondered first what is happening in the lives of the people who join or participate in this organization, then what happened in their participation in the organization that satisfied them, and finally, whose interests the organization serves.

The group of women who attend Association meetings and become its leaders belong to that category of mothers who have been maligned in the literature and in the popular view for at least the last 100 years (English

and Erhenright, 1979). They are the grasping mothers, the supermoms, the suffocating mothers, the cold mothers, as well as being the country club set, the Junior Leaguers, and the volunteers. Their working friends, neighbors, mothers, brothers, sisters and husbands think they do nothing all day long except watch the soaps and go shopping. They are women who are so fortunate and so affluent, who have it so easy, and who are also so lazy that the rest of society spends half the time calling it the American dream and the other half casting aspersions.

There is a measure of truth to the claim that the kinds of issues Association mothers are concerned with is thin icing on an otherwise ample cake. Other mothers are frequently concerned with more fundamental matters such as food, clothing, shelter, and safety, and often with the death of their traditions, visions, hopes and dreams. It is true that Association mothers do not generally have to concern themselves with the fundamentals of existence. But it is precisely because they're supposed to have it so easy, and despite that, their concerns as mothers are so great, that it behooves us to look at their pains.

Mothers in the Association, and many others like them, some working part-time, some at home, are caught in a vicious double bind. Because their husbands have taken care of other pressing material concerns, they have had the time to explore and articulate their condition. Besides being comfortable and wealthy and fortunate, they are also an intensely concerned group of young women who want to do the best they can for their children, their families and themselves. Their fundamental difficulty, which they share with other mothers in this culture, lies in the fact that they live in a society which tells them on the one hand to make something of themselves

and if they don't, it's their own fault; and which, on the other hand, ranks the job that they alone must do as almost completely worthless. They live in a society whose government ranks being a parent as lower than being a dog trainer, where being a foster parent ranks together with restroom attendant, or a child care attendant with parking lot attendant (Bernard, 1974). Trying to upgrade that pitifully low status is one of the few paths open to them.

The organizational structure and philosophy of the Association are a direct response to the powerful and painful double bind which women of this class experience when they become mothers. Through the use of specific boundary devices, a community was created where before there was no contact. By artful manipulation of the symbols and values of its class, the organization attracts members who share the same background and values. Through the use of organizational structures which the women as a group accept as having high status, the organization responds to the conflicts immanent within the beliefs and situation of middle class mothers by "professionalizing" motherhood.

It does this in essentially two different ways. For the leadership, the Association provides direct experience with an organization based on business/professional model. For them, participation results in learning new skills--organizational skills, not parenting skills. For the members, the organization provides general information and some personal meetings where interaction with others like themselves is possible. Their participation results in meeting new people, possibly decreasing their sense of isolation. Some of them will go on to become board members, to learn new skills, gain more confidence, and subsequently, sometimes, move out of the

organization.

We have argued that because the organization provides an avenue to let off steam, to reduce the stress of middle class motherhood (particularly for the mothers of demanding infants and toddlers), it reinforces the "choice" which creates their stress in the first place. From this standpoint, and taken on its own terms, the organization should be considered "successful." Of all those interviewed only one said that her participation made her realize that she wanted immediately to resume her professional career in addition to motherhood. For the remainder, the choice they made was reinforced by their participation.

How successful the organization is in larger terms is more difficult to assess. In most societies in the world, the domestic or private sphere is considered to be the province of women, including child-rearing and homemaking, while the political or public sphere is considered to be the province of men (Lamphere, 1974). The Association has essentially tried to combine the two spheres in a very specific way. They have rejected the forced choice between two roles they feel are available to middle class Anglo women, careers or traditional motherhood, and tried to deal with the low status domestic sphere by turning it into a high status public one by giving motherhood attributes of the male professional world. The difficulty lies in the contradiction inherent in this approach, an approach which has always been available to middle class women: derivation of status from men and from the male sphere. This organization continues a male bias. <u>While it tries to raise the status of domestic work by giving it male trappings, it reinforces the cultural ideal which relegates child-rearing and socialization to the sole and exclusive province of women.</u>

While joining an organization which reinforces a stressful situation may not be the answer in the long run, neither is full-time participation in the waged work force. Women have too long suffered from the burden of double careers. In order to reduce the stress experienced by these and other mothers, in order to alleviate their concerns, men will have to participate in children's socialization. If they wish to have happy families and children, men will have to be equal partners in parenthood, and the structure of the workplace will have to be altered to accommodate a viable sharing family. The social priorities must be changed to reflect the importance of child-rearing and socialization, and policy in both the social and economic spheres needs to promote that change.

C. THE ASSOCIATION OF MOTHERS AS CULTURAL REINFORCEMENT

In our original conceptualization of the process of Cultural Reinforcement, we had assumed that there were a number of traditional nuclear families who had found themselves suddenly in the minority, and who felt their lifestyle attacked by the media, women's liberation and the evidence around them of other families changing, breaking up, and experimenting with new forms of family life. In the face of society's apparent loss of faith in the myth of the nuclear family as not only the norm, but also the optimal arrangement for insuring the orderly socialization of children into society, we proposed that these families and other social institutions interested in preserving them would counterattack and use means at their disposal to reinforce the correctness of the traditional division of labor between husband and wife.

The problem is that the work of the wife, and in particular full-time motherhood, is a low status occupation. The solution to this problem lies in increasing the value accorded by society to motherhood as an occupation. This can be done by elevating this occupation to the category of a profession, one where formal training is needed, or, in a more radical view, where formal monetary compensation is awarded.

The Association of Mothers is an example of such an attempt. It begins by setting up a category, "mothers," and endows them with positive attributes. Implied in the philosophy is that if nobody else recognizes the importance and worth of mothers, it is up to the mothers themselves to do so. A community is created of previously unrelated individuals who join in a mutual support system, one that works as much at the level of symbols and informa-

tion as it does at the level of real interpersonal relationships. The participants in the Association do not have to attend face-to-face neighborhood meetings to feel important. They get the message through the newsletter and from selected speakers who relay the same message: motherhood is an important job, mothers are important people, they are doing fine and there is nothing to be ashamed of.

What is special about the Association of Mothers is that in order to create and maintain an organization to carry out this reinforcement function, it has chosen to borrow the tools of the male business world to do it. It uses already high status symbols from the business world to elevate their own status. As such, it rejects the model of traditional organizations that women often join while they are mothers, the volunteer community service committee.

The second characteristic of the Association is that it has attracted a special type of stay-home mother. They are mothers who gave up occupations that were of higher status, closer to career-type jobs than the vast majority of women in this society. They had had a taste of success, recognition, money, self-fulfillment. The educational level of the participants is quite high, relative to the general population. Only twenty percent of the participants have not finished college; thirty percent had MA degrees. Their husbands' educational attainments are even higher. What this means is that when these women made the decision to become mothers, in most cases they gave up a high status occupation for a low status job. They have exchanged a world of short-term tangible rewards for one where it is hard to judge the quality of the work done, where she is held totally responsible for the product, although there was no real choice over the raw material.

The participants in the Association of Mothers have some doubts about the quality of the job they are doing as mothers, and feel the isolation of work that for the most part takes place in the private domain of the home. They miss the freedom of movement of their previous work life, and would like to have more time for themselves. And yet, they are not dissatisfied with the choice to be mothers. They have found enough intrinsic rewards to feel satisfied. Since their basic economic needs are being met by their husbands, and they enjoy a relatively high standard of living, they can afford to demand more. What they want now is recognition, being valued by society for the sacrifice they do to raise the next generation. This is what the Association of Mothers has done for them. It has broken the sense of social isolation, although it has not resulted necessarily in meeting new people. Just the knowledge that they are not alone in their concerns serves that purpose. The leaders have invested more time and effort and not surprisingly also get more out of their involvement. They have created high status occupations for themselves by building and running an organization as a business. In the process, they have met face to face with other women like themselves, breaking their social isolation, feeling effective, successful and still feeling part of an important class of citizens: mothers.

CHAPTER VII: THE CASE STUDIES: CULTURAL REORIENTATION IN THE MOTHER-CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (MCDP)

A. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

The Mother-Child Development Program is located in the west side of San Antonio, some three miles from downtown. It is one of several programs sponsored by the Loveman Christian Center, serving the Mexican-American barrio. The Mother-Child Development Program provides a variety of services to selected families, including social and medical services, but the central thrust of the program is to teach mothers a number of concepts and skills in child development and home management and to provide their one to three year old children with planned educational experiences.

The program in San Antonio is an offshoot of a national effort in parent-child education. In 1970, the Office of Child Development funded pilot programs in three cities. These programs were set up as variations of parent/child education, each developing a model adapted to particular ethnic populations and regional conditions. All, however, were set up with similar goals, and were directed at target populations of low-income families. Moreover, all represented a federal initiative, supervised at a national level, and introduced into selected communities. One of these models was developed to meet the needs of low-income Mexican-American families and was located in another Texas city.

After five years of development and evaluation of the three pilot programs, a second phase of the project began, involving replication of the three original models. A management team, based in New York City, was funded to monitor the replication process "in the interests of maintaining

program characteristics and quality. The stated goals of the program are presented in a mimeographed brochure circulated during one of the functions of the program . It reads: " The primary goal is to provide educational opportunities and a variety of supportive systems for families with low incomes who are raising very young children." This statement emphasizes supporting and educating families, with young children benefitting no more than any other members. In the same brochure, this broad goal is further delineated by a list of "features" of the design of all the programs across the nation.

--"The mother is viewed as the primary recipient of the program effect.

--"The focus is on the first three years of the child's life.

--"The programs include a broad range of content on young children and their development; health and nutrition; family life; knowledge of community resources; and other topics that can help mothers become as effective as possible in all aspects of their lives.

--"The (MCDPs) provide a range of social and health services for the participants.

--"The program staff includes people with different educational and professional qualifications. The majority of each staff is from the same cultural and ethnic background as the mothers.

--"Continuing staff development is an integral part of the program design."

While these statements are not phrased as goals, they clarify the primary goal statement in at least one important way: the mother is the primary recipient of the services offered by the program.

While the New York based management organization defines the program with emphasis placed on families and changing the mother, another brochure

handed out at the same commencement exercise states: "It's goal is to develop and demonstrate ways of strengthening families and enabling parents to optimize the intellectual, social, and physical development of their young children, and to maintain these gains over a long period of time." This statement demonstrates a different perspective from the Management team's perspective. A much stronger emphasis is placed on the outcomes expected for the child enrolled in the program, with an implication that families need to be strengthened as an instrument to help optimize the development of children. Secondly, the experimental nature of the program, rather than the service aspect of the program, is emphasized in the phrase "develop and demonstrate ways."

A third document, authored by one of the principal designers and evaluators of the original model program, in a 1976 report, emphasizes to an even greater extent that the program is aimed at children and the parents are instrumental in furthering the development of school-related behavior of their children.

"The ultimate goal of the program is to help parents help their own children to optimize their school performance." The document continues to specify goals for each family member: that mothers "will be affectionate, use non-restrictive controls, provide opportunities for exploration and curiosity, encourage verbal interaction, view the home as a learning environment, provide for interesting, challenging play experiences, and view herself as a teacher of her child;" that fathers "will support the participation of their wives in program and see themselves as important teachers of their children;" and that children "will be competent cognitively, linguistically, and socially."

The organization designed to accomplish these goals consists of a number of components, which can be classified into three general areas: educational components, social and medical service components, and research and evaluation components. Staff and parents spend by far the majority of their time in educational components. These consist of a home visiting phase, an in-center phase, family workshops, and parent meetings.

When a child selected for program participation reaches approximately one year of age, a parent educator begins to visit the family's home. Over the next eight to ten months, the educator makes some thirty visits, attempting to see the mother and child once a week. The educator consults a curriculum guideline before going out to her visit, gathers toys and materials designed to teach a specific topic in child development, and goes to meet with the mother.

These visits last from one to two hours. The mother's role in teaching "sensory, perceptual, conceptual, language, motor and social development" is stressed. According to a hand-out on the "In-Home Program,"

> The educator uses open-ended questions as much as possible when discussing the topic for that week so that the mother is able to share her ideas on the major points. A review of the previous topic is done before each new visit. In asking questions, the educator learns what the mother already knows. Also the educator discovers how the mother feels about helping her child in certain areas of child development. Our role as an In-Home Educator begins in that we fill in with additional information which the parent may need; thus, making the shared learning approach more meaningful.

During this first year of home visiting, a second component of the program takes place. Family Workshops are held on four Sundays at intervals during the year. These workshops are designed especially to attract fathers to participate. Each workshop is centered around a major theme:

1) Communications, 2) Decision-Making, 3) Problem Solving, and 4) Role relationships within the family. Each one of these themes is broad enough to include any number of concrete examples or issues to discuss.

Upon completion of the "In-Home" phase of the mothers and children they begin the In-Center" phase of the program.

Arriving at the center, mothers sign in. On a typical day after the in-center phase has begun, children will leave their mothers and be taken to their classrooms by one of the teachers or aides.

Sometime after 9:00 a.m., after arrivals and greetings settle down, all the mothers gather and sit at the small hexagonal tables. Many times a blackboard has been placed in front of the group. At this time, parent educators make announcements, go over scheduling for the week, plan special events such as field trips, bake sales, or address problems that have arisen. Although the parent educator controls this meeting, introducing business, and standing above the mothers, she solicits opinions and encourages discussion among the mothers.

At 9:30, the mothers split into two groups. One of the groups moves towards one of the smaller classrooms at the end of the main room. These classes last forty-five minutes. At 10:15, everyone takes a break, returning to the main room, perhaps pouring themselves some coffee. At 10:30, a second class begins, and the two groups switch off. By the end of the day, both groups have had classes in child development and either sewing or nutrition, depending on the day. At 11:15, the mothers go to the class-

rooms to get their children, and siblings return from across the street. They set out silverware, napkins and plates for themselves and their children. Then everyone lines up at the counter and serves themselves the lunch for the day. Federal lunch program monies finance the meal. When lunch is finished, mothers and children clean up, ready themselves to leave, chat with their friends briefly, and then leave in the vans.

The in-center phase of the program is augmented by night meetings scheduled once a month. Fathers are encouraged to come to these meetings. They usually begin with coffee and dessert at 7:30 and last until 8:30 or 9:00 P.M. During the meetings, children may stay with their parents in the main room, or go with one of the classroom teachers and play in the classrooms.

Parent educators solicit suggestions from mothers the month prior to a meeting concerning what kind of activity or speaker they would like to have for the meeting. The parent meetings are designed in the program model and considered by the staff to be the most parent directed component of the program. In practice, however, the parent educators are responsible for securing a speaker for the group and making arrangements for the meeting. As a result, the parent educators tend to offer to the parents a limited number of options for the meeting and try to win the parents over to a topic for which they know they can get a speaker.

During the period of time of this study, approximately 25 mothers and their children were enrolled in the in-center phase, the main component of the porgram that was observed. Attendance, however, varied from day to day with an average of about 17 mothers present. A total of twelve mothers and seven staff members were interviewed.

B. PROGRAM IMPACT

With the use of individual case examples, we have examined the impact which the Mother Child Development Program has on the lives of participating mothers. The different backgrounds and circumstances of the participants lead them to absorb different aspects of the program's curriculum. The greater the distance they had created between themselves and their parents, the more likely they would find some aspects of the program relevant to their lives. The more supportive their husbands were of participation, the more likely they would apply lessons from the program to their own lives. These circumstances in their lives affect the values which these parents bring to the program.

The program attempts to manipulate the participants' values of education, respect, and exclusive child-care in order to introduce them to new roles and new behaviors which child development experts, the designers of the program, believe lead to improved academic performance for children. In particular, some mothers reported changes in verbal behavior with their children, as a result of the emphasis in the program on teaching verbal skills. Others indicated that their discipline methods had become more verbal. A number of mothers acquired the language of the program, learning labels for discipline techniques which they practiced but had not been able to articulate. Thus, their verbal behavior with their children increased as well as their own confidence in articulating their maternal behaviors. Secondly, almost all reported that they paid more attention to their children. Many mothers adopted less authoritarian methods of discipline. While many still believed in spanking, they also thought that parents

should listen to their children more. In regard to this change, some of these mothers were reevaluating the traditional family dynamics encoded in the value of "respect."

Finally, many women found that the role of mother expanded as they became conscious of teaching and disciplinarian roles, in addition to nurturing roles. Being a mother became something more complicated as well. Whereas most continued to hold a traditional value that only kinspeople should be allowed to care for children if a mother couldn't, many were now not sure whether their kinspeople's child-rearing values and practices were coincident with those of the program. Whereas some began to doubt their mothers and mothers-in-law, they also learned to separate from their children and trust leaving them with strangers in the program. As they became more aware of the expanded mother role, they found that not only did they need to be aware of discipline and teaching, but also to be cognizant of "managing" their children's comings and goings between impersonal institutional arenas and highly personal kinship systems.

Not all women experienced these impacts. The program did not reach some women. The women who made little mention of dramatic changes in the child-rearing practices were generally more closely tied to their own parents and their community of birth, San Antonio. Some of the problems of marital conflict for these women were not addressed in the program. The impact of the program for them was generalized support. They found that the program provided a warm, family-like environment.

The impact on participants' child-rearing practices confirms some of the intended outcomes expected by the program. Yet these outcomes are both more and less than what many of these participants wanted.

The impact on some mothers' child-rearing practices was so great that dissonance resulted; they found themselves experiencing painful self-doubt and yielding to experts and educators whom they did not completely trust. Yet, at the same time, the program neglected teaching skills and supporting ambitions which would have enhanced Mexican-American and Mexican women's competence in dealing with the Anglo world around them. While their competence as mothers was heightened, their competence as people was neglected. This unintended outcome of the program, in part resulting from funding cutbacks, seemed to be compounded by the model of cultural deficit encoded in the curriculum by the program's designers, held by most of the staff, and operationalized through the hierarchical structuring of educational encounters and organizational roles. Together, these attitudes, ideological messages, and structures defined the mothers as the least competent, least powerful people in the situation.

C. THE MCDP AS A CASE STUDY OF CULTURAL REORIENTATION

Having described the organization and formal properties, the participant characteristics, and the parental concerns and impacts of the Mother Child Development Program, this conclusion attempts to draw out the fundamental features which can serve to classify this program as a case of the general model of cultural reorientation. Central to this model of parent education and cultural change is the relationship set up between a dominant culture which designs and implements the program and a minority culture which experiences the impact. In the first place, the funds, supervision, organization, and curriculum are all in some sense determined from outside the community of parents which the program serves.

Just as the Anglo school system and most places of work controlled by Anglos impose their values on the people of a minority culture, so do parent education programs impose certain values associated with the family structures and values of the dominant culture. While parent education intends to mediate the relationship of minority families to school and work, it in reality ends up replicating the relationship. Thus, in the Mother Child Development Program, certain behaviors thought to be important for school performance are selectively emphasized as the skills that mothers should teach their children. The possibility that more traditional behaviors of ethnic groups may be equally effective is rarely considered. Thus, the traditional value of respect is further undermined for mothers participating in the program. The emphasis on verbal behavior ignores the possibility of equally effective non-verbal means of communicating with and controlling children. These values emerge in the parent education

program despite the fact that all staff are bilingual, many of the classes are held bilingually, and there is a superficial affirmation of Mexican-American culture in the program.

The hierarchical organization and the consistent reinforcement of asymmetrical status relationships are an important feature in a cultural reorientation model. That the ideology and practice of the organization advocate more egalitarian parent-child relationships while at the same time undermining mother's adult status in the program is an especially ironic twist in this kind of model. Finally, the underlying assumptions of parental deficit in raising their children, deficits attributed to minority culture and class position, contribute to the model's definition of the problem. The solution offered by the program is to reorient parents to the child-rearing values established by experts of the dominant culture. This model does not readily recognize other definitions of the problem of being a parent, such as women's lack of skills outside the family or relegation of many Mexican-American men and women to unfulfilling jobs.

But the cultural reorientation offered by the program is not totally rejected by parents, even if they have a broader self-definition. Many have chosen assimilation and upward mobility as solutions to the problem of minority status in the United States. As so many ethnic groups before them, many Mexican-American and Mexican women are taking advantage of opportunities presented them by government programs. They are particularly vulnerable to the appeal of schooling for improving the life-chances and well-being of their children. The cost in terms of loss of cultural and personal identity is one that many seem willing to pay. Those that resist the imposition of Anglo child-rearing values seem to be holding on more

tenaciously to the values of the barrio, to a web of kinship ties, and to the frustrations of inner-city life.

CHAPTER VIII: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

We have examined three parent education programs as instances of more general models of cultural change in American families. It is time now to summarize the similarities and differences between the programs, their participants and each program's place in the community. In each case, we need to examine the extent to which the proposed models of change illuminate the experiences of the participating parents, the changes advocated by the programs, and the articulation, match or mismatch between these two. That, we propose, is their relative impact.

The Effective Parenting Course is closely tied to the larger River City community. It is sponsored by the River City Parent Child Association, and as such it responds to the interests and values of a particularly aware segment of parents and human service professionals. The course itself, however, is open and directed to the community at large, advertised in city wide media and offered using the facilities of the Community Education System, a city wide service funded by the city and the School District. The course attempts to attract couples by using a "couples fee", and working parents by being offered at night. The central location chosen is convenient to all areas of the city. This positive feature, however, may account for its failure to attract minority parents, who are more responsive to neighborhood programs.

The people attracted to the course have all recently moved to their current residences, many from other cities and states. They are extremely isolated, far from their families and with very few friends, specially other parents. In most cases the husbands/fathers share a very minor role in the care and socialization of their children. The economic conditions

of these families are those of middle-class scarcity, where most basic needs are met, but there is little disposable income to buy services or recreation that would increase family well-being and promote family life. The stress experienced by these mothers begun with changes in the behavior of their preschool age children that they could not understand or control. Many of them have resorted to negative techniques of control that their own parents used and which they would like to change. They were attracted to the program seeking authoritative knowledge and advice, more satisfactory techniques. Although they found the instructor less authoritative than what they would have liked, still they learned concepts and skills that made a difference in their behavior toward their children and in their own self-control. In addition, they found in the discussions a sense of emotional support from other mothers who had similar problems. By a process of social comparison, impossible in their previous isolation, they found that many of their problems were shared by others and most could be solved with the help of some techniques and time. The cultural elaboration model requires personal initiative. Most of these parents were self-selected, self-motivated and willing to commit time and resources for their self-help and for the benefit of their families.

The Association of Mothers is also closely tied to the larger community, using its resources to function. The Association was founded by and for the interests of a particular segment of mothers, those who stay home with their children. Its organizational style and ideology made it particularly attractive to a special group of mothers, those who have given up higher status occupations or careers in order to become full-time mothers. These

women are highly educated and their economic wellbeing meets all their basic needs. In addition, most are able to buy services and recreation to enrich their family life. They have defined as their problem the low status accorded by society to the occupation of full-time mother and housewife. In their case, they feel more dissonance because they have chosen to move from high status occupations to motherhood. Thus, the Association attempts to reduce dissonance by marshalling supportive evidence to prove how important and special their job really is. After all, they are raising the generation that will take over running the community; tomorrow's leaders, managers, professionals, in short, the ruling class. Their main concern is not changing their parental behavior, but rather the status of motherhood as an occupation. Some of the activities of the Association deal with the parent-child relationship, and as such, it makes it a parent education program. Their attention, however, is concentrated on the mother, her self-image, her self-fulfillment, rather than her relationship with her children. The women who participate in the association are also self-selected. They make no committment to participate on a regular basis, and the monetary cost is almost symbolic, considering their level of income. The cultural reinforcement model is based on a manipulation of symbols, and it does not require much personal involvement. The organization itself has mechanisms for increasing personal involvement as options to members. The greater the involvement, the more information and reinforcement they get and the less isolated they feel. At the highest level, the leaders have created for themselves high status occupations that they hold while still maintaining their condition of full-time mothers.

The Mother Child Development Program was imposed upon the community it serves. Other than being physically in the heart of the west side barrio, it

has no formal or informal ties with any grassroots community organization. It was conceived far away by professional members of the dominant culture, it was funded by a distant Foundation dominated by Anglos, it was implemented as a replication under the watchful eye of a distant management team. This management team hired and trained the staff, all Mexican-American professionals and paraprofessionals who no longer live in the barrio. In order to exist, the program had to seek out and recruit, it had to create a willing client population. Because of research and evaluation constraints, prospective clients had to be screened to make sure that a cohort of homogeneous normal children were included in each wave. The program tried to balance between low income families with a working member and families on welfare.

The curriculum of the program represents what the professionals think is necessary to correct deficits that the parents are assumed to have by virtue of their membership in the class of "low income Mexican-Americans living in the barrio." This class includes a variety of families: single (never married) mothers, divorced or abandoned mothers, common-law marriages, remarriages, and intact families. In addition, within the class "Mexican-Americans" fall people born and raised in families living in the barrio for two and three generations, families who have just moved in from the rural areas of Texas, giving up migrant work, and families of recent immigrants from Mexico. These variations in geographical origin are tied to variations in language competency, bilingualism, and relative contact with and loyalty to the culture of Mexico.

The curriculum of the program, although flexible in certain areas, is still overdetermined and superimposed on the participants. Their only real options are to agree with the changes advocated, to acquiesce while the

additional rewards are high enough, or simply to leave the program. Drop outs complicate the overall research and evaluation, so the staff tried to bend over backwards to keep participants, within the limitations imposed by their character as "replication" of a "model."

The likelihood of reorienting mothers is increased by the length and intensity of the program, relative to the others we have studied. Some of the participants happened to be at a point in their lives as parents when they were ready for a change. Others, strongly attached to their kin and the culture of the barrio did not feel a need to change basic values and practices. Given the heterogeneous nature of the group, the effects of the program were mixed. The children have profited uniformly from their daily structured program of preschool education. There are genuine efforts on the part of the staff and the designers to impact the mothers as women. However, when the funding became scarce, the research (rather than service) nature of this program forced sacrificing those components and activities that could have made a difference in the lives of the mothers as women.

In conclusion, it is relatively easy to accomplish a good deal of cultural elaboration of the parental roles of those who are already aware of their need to change and have some ideas about where they want to go.

It is also relatively easy to boost the feelings of worth of a group of educated, affluent full-time mothers. They are more than happy to spend a few dollars for a night out, and in exchange to add some consonant cognitions to support their choice between high status occupation and low status motherhood.

Finally, it is harder to accomplish a reorientation in values and practices with a heterogeneous group of families. Some are ready, willing

and happy to do it. Others, who came enticed by the stipend and other benefits they could use to supplement an economy of survival, may or may not be ready to change. If their kin and ties to the barrio are strong, they will take what they can use and discard the rest. In all cases, they will find themselves in the lower end of a hierarchically organized program that defines them and many elements of their culture as not the best way to raise the next generation.

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